

DIARY ENTRIES OF A HESSEL RANCHER

RAYMOND TRAVERS GERE

Diane Davis-Jaigirdar, 1993:

In January of 1923, my grandfather, Raymond Travers Gere, Sr., then 24, a former student of poultry husbandry with U.C. Davis' Department of Agriculture, had just purchased six acres of untilled land to ready for poultry farming in Hessel, California. He spent the next five months plowing, planting kale, building hen houses, purchasing chicks and equipment, and making preparations for his wedding to my grandmother, Janie Simpson Weir, 22, whose arrival he awaited with great anticipation.

The following two entries are taken from his diary of that same January, 1923. In the first, he addresses the new year, itself, full of expectation and hope for the future of his marriage and for that of the farm. The second entry includes an account of estimated expenses and profits for the first year of business, raising chickens and selling eggs.

* * *

Monday, January 1, 1923

Early fog; then warm and fine. All hail 1923!

May you see much happiness and a steadily bettergrowing world. I start you working, and was asleep when you came into being, in my little cot (with the hard lump) on the ex-

Caldwell place, and now Gere place, here six miles south of Sebastopol.

I start you with high hopes — for one thing, that you will see Janie and I wedded and happy, and able to adjust ourselves before you're gone. Then I'm getting started on this place, and you'll see what success I have in raising and housing chicks and pullets, and making a go of it.

Health we have now; may it continue.

Thursday, January 5, 1923

Rained all night, misty a.m.

Joined the Farm Bureau yesterday, through J.J. Irving. Wrote diary, looked over various things. Off to S.F. — waited an hour in Petaluma and sketched expenses, roughly, for a year or two to come.

H & I discussed my money needs and went over my plans and figures again. Will take \$700 first three months — \$350 for 2000 chicks, \$315 for three months feed; \$40 for two tons coal; \$80 for my eats, four months; these are among the main items. Then to seven months, when eggs laid begin to pay expenses, have about \$400 more for feed to pay, \$100 for grub, \$100 wedding and house expenses. \$1,300 outlay to seven months.

Harry is lending it as I need it, borrowing on his stocks. It will be all outgo until September when pullets begin laying well. Last four months of year, can figure on

\$150 a month average profit, if pullets do pretty well. Hope to get together \$500 more to build a 500-unit laying house this summer to put the pullets in. Counting my hens before they are raised? Have to do it, to reach a basis for figuring a way out.

Absorbed in my little interests these days — feathering the nest. Many interesting things going on in the world I do not record. Too small a space for world affairs. Mine are so much more important!

* * *

D.D.J.:

Raymond and Janie had four children: Dorie, Millie, Ray, Jr., and Bobby. Their second daughter and my mother, Mildred Weir Gere (Davis), recalls some early childhood memories of life on that farm.

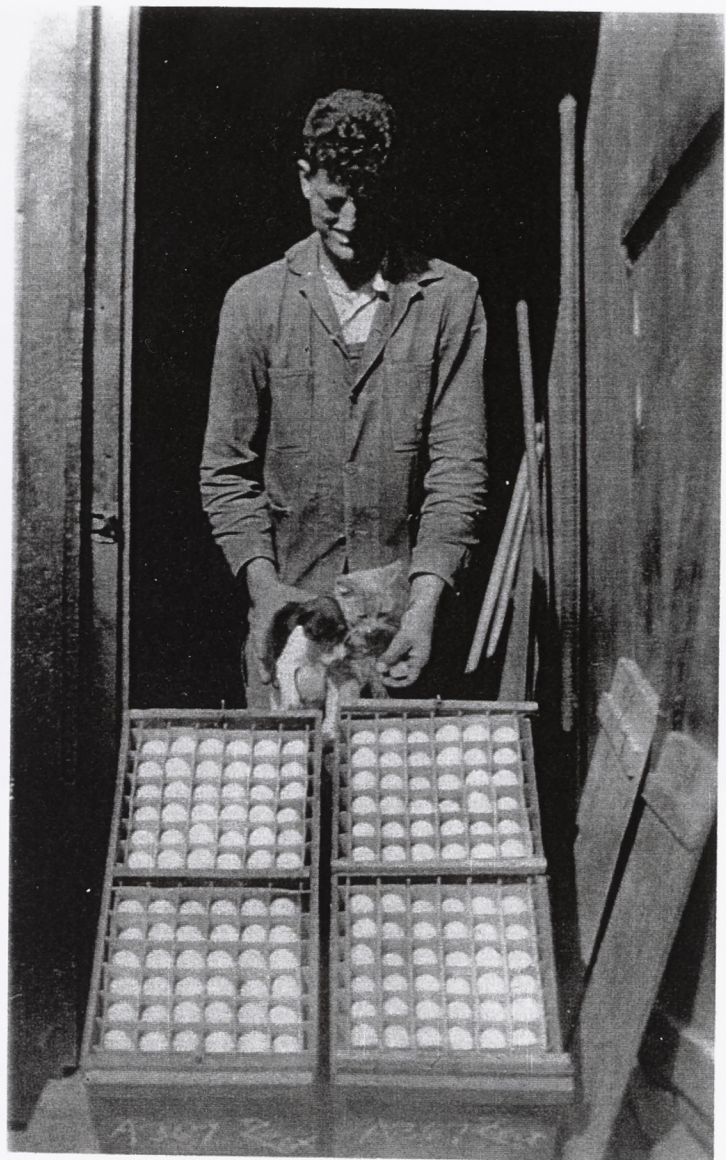
Mildred Weir Gere Davis, 1993:

My sister was born April of 1924, and I was born June 2, 1926. We lived in Hessel until I was three. I remember being outdoors so much of the time. First of all, being lucky enough to live in a fair climate and my father, as busy as he was, always seemed to enjoy us. We always got that feeling, being tossed up in the air or going for a ride in a wheelbarrow. That is an early memory. I couldn't have been more than two or three when much of this was taking place. We had a Piggly-Wiggly wagon which was very common

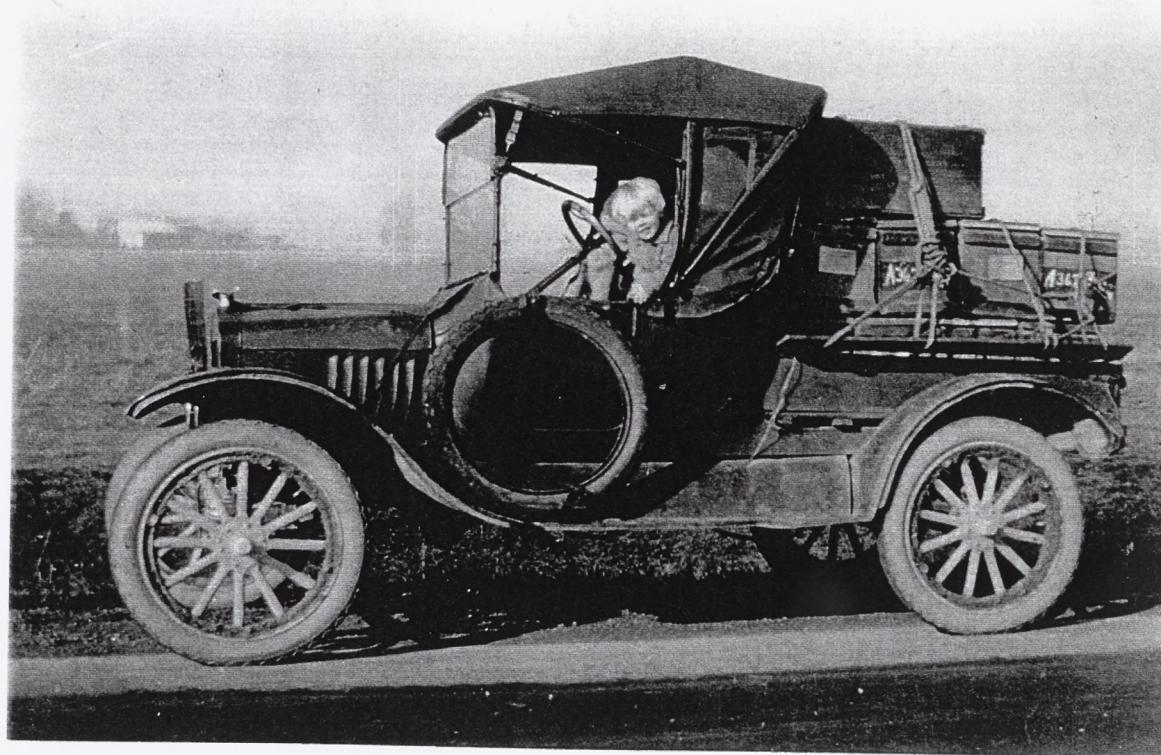
in those days. We had little tricycles. No swimming pools or anything like that, but we frequently got squirted by my dad with the hose.

I think my father was aware of giving my mother a break so it wasn't just that he loved us all that dearly, although he did. Dad would give us rides in the masher which is a long tubular shaped vessel that hung on a pulley and we would go riding along with him as he would stop and give the mash to the chickens inside and sometimes he would just, either before or after, just give us a long...send us off with a real big push and we would go the length of this long building where the chickens were housed and that was a fun thing that I remember and the wheelbarrow rides.

Raymond Traversa Gere, along with a pup and a kitty, surveying cases containing 720 fresh eggs from his hens which were sometimes laying 1,000 eggs a day (50% production) on his ranch in Hesse! (taken about February 1, 1927).



Raymond Travers Gere, along with a puppy and kitty, surveying cases containing 720 fresh eggs from his hens which were sometimes laying 1,000 eggs a day (50% production) on his ranch in Hessel. (Taken about February 1, 1927).



Doris Louise Gere in the driver's seat of her father's 1927 Ford Model "T". "The way we haul 'em to market. 10 cases, 3600 eggs on their way to Petaluma, some to the Poultry Producers of Central Calif. to be graded, candled & shipped for eating, and the rest hatching eggs to Sales' Hatchery, to become future chicks, after 21 days sojourn in their electric incubators." - Raymond Travers Gere, Hessel Poultryman (taken about February 1, 1927)

- Photo by Raymond Travers Gere



Raymond Travers Gere and his wife Janie Simpson
Weir Gere in front of their poultry ranch in Hessel
between 1924 and 1927.



Harry Gere, brother of Hessel Poultryman Raymond Travers Gere, surrounded by chickens which are "strung forever. This lot of pullets we sell to Mrs. Bradt of Chico, June 14, 1924, at 3 mos. of age."

- Photo by Raymond Travers Gere

Ther Tuesday, Oct. 11, 1921

Wea

Fair & Warm

Beau, one of these days. Both look well, though a little pale. Mr. Beau & Helen had a fine trip East.

Left for Santa Cruz Monday morning on the bus. Pretty ride on the mountains. Went through the Poultry Produce Plant there, saw Mr. Norris. He has about 600 chickens. House built on university model. Doing well. Has a fine house & much land.

Egg laying contest building nest. Mr. Kortum in charge showed me the Hyatt Electric hatching chickens, & talked for quite a while.

Cover to Mr. Gibbons, who has horses on Smith pattern - all day down water, was on with side.

Cover to J. Hornwell's. Both working, he on new line. type house, she minding maid. Shind one around. Give young stock

Ther Wednesday, Oct. 12, 1921

Wea

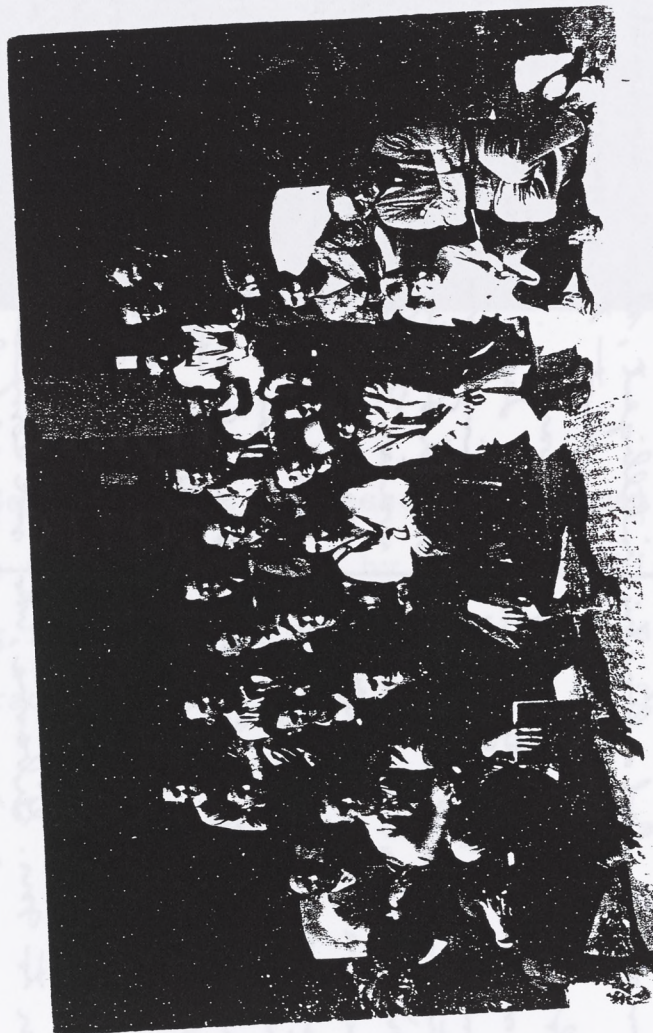
Warm; Hazy; May Rain

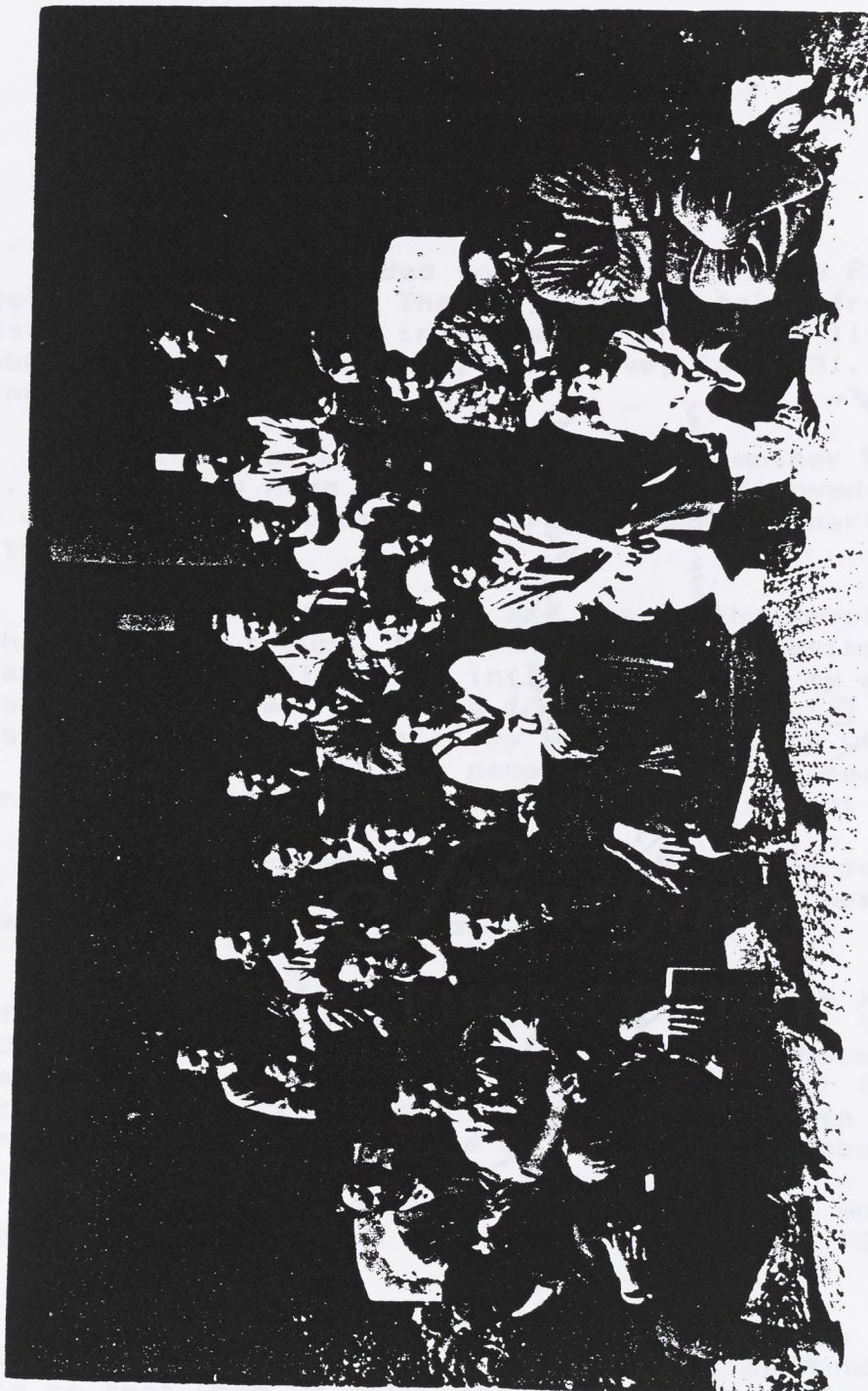
free range; trap nest; going into breeding side. Handworkers, intelligent, sure to succeed. We went to a movie & supper afterward.

Left Santa Cruz Tuesday morning - no time to visit back on big trees. Got in at water Tuesday evening at 4:40 via San Jose, Mantua & Modesto. Walked out to Genes. They

He has an enormous car - bundle on the back of his neck right over the spinal cord, & didn't feel extra. Ed said he was sick also. Flora looks the same, very sharp & helpful, not complaining, with all her trouble. Spent the evening discussing religion, our thing & going. They are good thinkers in a way. Flora was at some meetings - took Dorothy - not

VC Davis
 Poulton class
 1925





It was routine, it was not a matter of running out. My parents were not intimidated. I was old enough to know what was going on, and I was not afraid. When I came home from school, I talked to the sheriff's deputy.

My parents didn't feel fear or resentment. You must remember where they came from, all that they had been through in Russia.

Left to right.

Back Row:-

A. L. Horn, D. B. Pierce, N. D. Dickey, C. M. Denney, P. P. Mothman, R. A. Stephens, C. H. Kunder.

Next Row:-

C. H. Tucker, A. W. Barker, R. T. Bowman, R. L. Abrams.

Second Row:-

A. R. Belton, A. R. Cole, Mrs. C. A. Terry, Miss K. Bielinsky, Miss Hart, Miss L. C. Rutherford, Mrs. R. E. Beloit.

Third Row:-

W. L. Lloyd, E. D. Ogden, A. L. Williams, Mrs. C. M. Denney, A. L. Thack.